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ABSTRACT

A study examined newspaper coverage of the United States' withdrawal from Unesco to determine whether the public was given a balanced picture of the issues involved and to examine the degree of impartiality of the coverage of one specific issue, the New World Information Order. The study analyzed reports that appeared in American daily newspapers from the Associated Press, United Press International, the New York Times News Service, and the Washington Post/Los Angeles Times News Service. Approximately 4,000 news stories, editorials, and columns dealing with the withdrawal were identified for the period from December 1983, when the U.S. announced its intention to withdraw, to December 1984, when the withdrawal formally took place. The stories were entered into a computer data base to determine patterns and orientation of coverage. The results indicated that of the nation's approximately 1,700 daily newspapers only 289, or about 17%, appeared to have carried any news reports at all on the withdrawal. Three-quarters of the published news reports were credited to one of the four agencies analyzed, the largest number from the Associated Press. The reports were highly critical of Unesco and supportive of the withdrawal. The newspapers followed the news agency agenda, and tended to select from the agency files those reports most critical of Unesco, while ignoring those that supported the organization or opposed the withdrawal. The results suggest that readers relying on their local paper for news on which to base their opinion about the merits of the withdrawal would have received a very one-sided picture of the issues involved. (HTH)

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THROUGH A LENS DARKLY

Press Coverage of the U.S. Withdrawal from UNESCO

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> Few have been as critical of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as the Western Press. The editorials and broadcasts would fill volumes.
>
> -- San Jose Mercury-News

The United States' withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1984 prompted an unprecedented volume of coverage of the agency by American newspapers. It was a significant foreign policy decision, marking a major change in American relations with international organizations, and bearing implications for continued membership of the United Nations itself. The United States was one of the founders of UNESCO, had largely shaped its course in the early years, and was its largest single source of funding.

Founded in London in 1946, UNESCO was charged with promoting peace through international cooperation in education, science and culture, especially in the poorer countries. UNESCO programs seek the eradication of illiteracy, the promotion of scientific research into questions of global interest, the restoration and preservation of the world's cultural treasures, and the free flow of ideas by word and image. UNESCO is governed by a General Conference of all member states -- now about 160 of them. There is a 51-member Executive Board, and a secretariat, headed by the director-general, which carries out programs agreed upon by the General Conference. It is one of the largest U.N. agencies, with an annual budget in 1984 of about $200 million.

By the mid-1970's, however, UNESCO's proposals for a New International Information Order had incurred the wrath of Western media organizations, concerned about threats of press controls that might hinder their international operations. And in 1983, the Reagan administration, accusing UNESCO of being politicized, mismanaged, and anti-free press and free enterprise, announced it planned to pull out if the organization did not undertake significant reforms within a year. It confirmed this decision in December 1984 after a hectic "year of crisis" during which proponents and opponents of the agency sought to influence the decision through the news media.

Analysis of the press coverage is of interest for several reasons. It provides a case study of how the U.S. press covers a major foreign policy issue. Given the importance of the withdrawal in the context of U.S. relations with the rest of the world, and the credo that an informed public can better make or accept policy decisions than a public that has been misinformed or kept in the dark, it is appropriate to ask whether Americans were given sufficient information about the withdrawal to arrive at their own opinion.

A second reason is that the UNESCO withdrawal was intimately linked to the dispute over the proposed New World Information Order. UNESCO's backing for this new order was cited by the press and by the Reagan administration as a major reason for the pullout. But UNESCO's communication policies have the virtually unanimous support of the developing countries. And those countries are the beneficiaries of most UNESCO programs aimed at improving education, literacy and culture. They stood to lose most if the U.S. stopped paying 25 percent of UNESCO's budget. One of the Third World complaints is that issues of importance to them are treated unsympathetically in the Western media. This analysis, then, is also a case study of the validity of their complaints.

Finally, given the fact that American media organizations were not merely impartial observers, but had played an active role in opposing moves in UNESCO to establish

a new information order, one can ask whether the proclaimed Western journalistic tenets of objectivity, impartiality and balance were met.

The focus of the study is on newspaper coverage. The UNESCO story did not readily lend itself to television news: it had to do with ideological conflict, not physical action that made good footage. During the year, the three major television networks carried a total of 13 news reports on the withdrawal: ABC and NBC had four each; CBS had five, plus a feature on "60 Minutes." Half of these news reports ran for 40 seconds or less. Coverage in the news magazines was equally sparse. Newsweek ran two reports during the year; Time had three, and U.S. News and World Report published four. Most of the coverage was in daily newspapers.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Previous studies of media coverage of UNESCO include a report on news coverage of the 1980 UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade, prepared by the National News Council, and a report on the Parris conference in 1982, prepared by George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. Both showed that U.S. media focused almost exclusively on UNESCO's communications policies; were highly critical of the agency, and offered few opposing viewpoints.[1]

METHOD

The present study is an analysis of reports that appeared in American daily newspapers from the Associated Press, United Press International, the New York Times News Service, and the Washington Post/Los Angeles Times News Service.

The period covered was from December 1983, when the U.S. announced its intention to withdraw, to December 1984 when the withdrawal formally took place. Material for the analysis was collected by a commercial clipping agency, Press Intelligence, Inc., of Washington, over the period December 1983 through December 1984. Press Intelligence clips about 1,400 daily papers, about 4,000 weeklies and most trade publications. It also subscribers to 20 regional clipping services. It claims comprehensiveness for U.S. print media. The clippings file yielded more than 4,000 published news stories, editorials and columns about the UNESCO withdrawal over the year. Its coverage was checked by matching the clippings it collected with files in two newspaper libraries, one in Seattle and one in San Francisco, and with the Index to the New York Times. About 2 percent of the clippings had to be discarded because they were duplicates or their labels were illegible.

Every newspaper story was entered into a computer data base, with fields specifying the date of publication, the name and circulation of the newspaper, the city and state in which it is published, the source, and the first sentence of the article. This made it possible to sort the largely random order of the clippings files to determine patterns of coverage. Articles could be sorted on any combination of fields. Matching the first sentences, for example, allowed researchers to check how many papers carried a specific news agency report even if the agency source was not given. Likewise, each newspaper's total coverage of the withdrawal could be determined.

Secondly, a sample was analyzed to determine the orientation of the coverage. The unit of analysis was the theme. Any statement of fact or any assertion about UNESCO was treated as a theme. Thus a sentence in a news report asserting that "American officials blasted the agency's deepening involvement in political activities prejudi-

cial to the West and favorable to Marxist countries" would be coded as having three themes: (1) that UNESCO was politicized; (2) that it was anti-West, and (3) that it was pro-Soviet. The source for each would be "U.S. officials." Altogether 189 different themes were identified.

These themes were aggregated into successively larger categories for analysis. First, the individual themes were clustered into one of 45 different topics. Thus such themes as "budget mismanagement", "overspending" and "too much spent on bureaucracy" were combined into a topic called "Budgetary Criticisms." Such themes as "overconcentration of staff in Paris", "too bureaucratic" and "personnel mismanagement" were included in the topic "Organizational Criticisms." These topics in turn were aggregated into 16 larger units we called issues. An issue could include several topics, and therefore a large number of themes. Thus the topics "Budgetary Criticism" and "Organizational Criticism" were combined into the issue "Mismanagement."

Finally, the issues were combined into one of three categories we have called orientations: Anti-UNESCO/pro-withdrawal; pro-UNESCO/anti-withdrawal; and a third category, Looking Ahead, that focused on what would happen next. This third category included issues relating to the future of UNESCO, the future U.S. relationship with UNESCO, and programs proposed by the U.S. in lieu of participation in UNESCO.

For the most part there was no difficulty in assigning items to the different categories. One possible exception was mentions of the fact that the United States paid 25 percent of UNESCO's budget. This was coded as being anti-UNESCO, because it was often reported in the context of statements to the effect that the U.S. was not getting value for its money, that U.S. funds were being used against its own interests, or that he who paid the piper should call the tune.

The reports were coded also to identify the date on which they appeared, the dateline, the agency, the reporter (if identified, otherwise the report was attributed to the agency as such), and the source quoted for each thematic statement. The sources, in turn, were clustered into larger categories we called "origins." Statements attributed to related sources, like a U.S. State Department official, or to "the Reagan administration" or simply to "American officials," were included in the origin, "U.S. Government." Other typical origins, derived from clusters of sources, included "Western Governments", the "Soviet Bloc," and the "Third World."

This technique enabled us to analyze the coverage at four different levels, from the very general (orientation) to the specific (theme), and to do cross-tabulations of any of the coded variables with each other. The data were analyzed at the University of Washington's Center for Social Science Computation and Research. Coding was done by graduate students in the School of Communications at the University of Washington. Inter-coder reliability, after training, was better than 80 percent.

FINDINGS

Few reports appeared in weekly publications, except occasionally in news magazines like Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report, or in specialist journals like Editor & Publisher, the Library Journal and the Chronicle of Higher Education. The three major news magazines between them carried nine reports on the topic during the year under review.

Of the nation's 1,700-odd daily newspapers only 289, or about 17 percent, appear to have carried any news reports at all on the withdrawal (Table 1). Seventy-five of

those papers had only one report; 21 had two, and 44 had between three and five. Nearly half the papers, therefore, carried five or fewer of the reports. Three-quarters carried ten or fewer.

At the other extreme, 13 papers carried more than 20 news reports. These included the Chattanooga Times (21 reports), the Columbus OH Dispatch (22), the Hackensack, NJ Record (22), the San Diego Union (23), Newsday (24), the Philadelphia Inquirer (24), the Kansas City Times (25), the Toledo Blade (26), the Washington Times (30), the Omaha World-Herald (34), the Washington Post (41) and the New York Times (66).

If the number of papers carrying news about the withdrawal was limited, the number of cities in which it appeared was even more so. Daily newspapers are published in 1,534 cities in the United States. Because many of the 289 papers that carried reports are published in larger cities that have two or more dailies, each of which carried some UNESCO stories, readers in only 194 cities, or 13 percent of the total, would have got news of the pullout from their local daily. The amount of news available to them varied widely from city to city. Of the 194 cities represented, just over 40 percent had a total of between one and five reports over the year (Table 2). More than half had ten reports or fewer, and 86 percent had 20 or fewer. Two cities, Washington and New York, were in a class by themselves. Washington readers, served not only by the Washington Post but by the Washington Times, and to a lesser extent by U.S.A. Today, could have read 81 reports if they had subscribed to all three papers. New York readers, served by the Times, the News, the Post and the Tribune, among others, had 89. Other cities with more than 25 reports in their papers over the year included Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chattanooga, Columbus, Denver, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Norfolk, Omaha, Philadelphia, Raleigh and San Diego.

There was a clear correlation between the circulation of the papers and the number of reports they carried (Pearson corr. 0.56). Papers with a circulation of 250,000 or more -- just 2 percent of the country's dailies -- accounted for nearly 25 percent of the reports carried. Large circulation was not a guarantee that a paper would carry a substantial number of reports, however. A more significant indicator was the paper's status as a serious newspaper of record. So, for example, in New York City, the New York Times (circ. 905,000), carried 66 reports, but the News (1,300,000) had four, and the Post (630,000) had one. Some large, prestigious papers did not give the issue as much coverage as one might have expected. The Los Angeles Times carried 14 reports; the Chicago Tribune 11, and the Detroit Free Press 8.

Papers that carried only a handful of the reports generally were smaller, or if large, were those that had no pretension of covering international news. They tended to cover only the major developments: the announcement of the intention to withdraw in December 1983; an arson fire at UNESCO's Paris headquarters in March 1984; Britain's planned withdrawal, announced in November; and the United States' final decision in December 1984.

Use of News Agency Reports

Three-quarters of the published news reports were credited to one of the four agencies analyzed (Table 3). Of all the attributed reports (including duplicates) the largest number by far were from the AP (56 percent of the reports carrying a credit). The New York Times was the second most widely used service (19 percent), followed by UPI (16 percent), the Washington Post/L.A. Times service (7 percent) and Reuter (2 percent).

Altogether 1,501 reports used by the press carried the credit of one of the four agencies. These represented multiple uses of just 226 separate news stories. Thus each report was used, on average, in about six newspapers. The most widely used was carried by 54. Some were not picked up at all. The AP provided 91 separate stories that were used, or 40 percent of the total. Next was UPI, followed by the New York Times and the Washington Post services (Table 4). Not only did the AP provide most of the reports used, but those reports were used by far more newspapers than the other services. Each AP report appeared, on average, in nearly 10 papers -- almost twice as many as the average for the other agencies.

Papers carrying reports from the AP or UPI had an average circulation of more than 140,000 copies. The New York Times material was used by papers with an average circulation of nearly 275,000 (including the Times itself), while the Washington Post and Reuters were used mainly by the very largest dailies. Because of the large circulation of the papers in which it appeared, the Washington Post reportage actually received more exposure -- in terms of the number of copies in which it appeared -- than the far more numerous UPI reports that appeared in smaller papers. The New York Times reports, also because of the large papers that carried them, were second only to the AP in total exposure.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

The clippings were sorted chronologically and a sample selected for analysis on a random interval basis. Of the 1,979 news clippings in the data base, about one quarter were analyzed. Because some reports appeared in a large number of newspapers there is some duplication in the sample. This was intentional since the aim was to examine nationwide exposure.

The number of themes from different agencies that appeared in the published reports was not proportional to the number of reports used from each agency, except in the case of the AP, which accounted for about 44 percent of all the reports used, and for 44 percent of the themes. The reports with no agency credit -- 23 percent of the total -- accounted for only 14 percent of the themes. This is because most of the reports with no agency credit line were very short, often appearing in a "news briefs" or "news roundup" column under a credit such as "from our wire services." UPI provided 16 percent of the reports used, but only 11 percent of the themes, largely because the papers often used shorter, edited-down versions of the agency's material. The Washington Post and the New York Times reports, however, were comparatively rich in themes. Although only 12 percent of the reports used came from the New York Times, they accounted for 23 percent of the themes. These reports were longer, more detailed and usually ran in papers with a news hole large enough to give them adequate play. This, coupled with the fact that these reports usually were carried in papers with very large circulations, gave these special service reports considerable exposure.

Orientation

The same content analysis schemed was applied earlier to the reports transmitted by the news agencies, whether they were used by the press or not. That study showed that 70 percent of the themes in the agency copy were anti-UNESCO or pro-withdrawal, compared to 25 percent that favored UNESCO or opposed the pullout.[2]

The news reports that appeared in the press were even more strongly anti-UNESCO and in favor of the withdrawal (76 percent of the themes), while there were propor-

tionately fewer themes supportive of UNESCO or opposed to the withdrawal (21 percent). See Table 5.

As in the case of the news agency coverage, most of the critical themes related to charges that UNESCO was politicized, mismanaged, and in need of reform. But each of these categories was more frequent in the press clippings than in the agency material. There also was a high proportion of expressions of support for the U.S. position, and of statements that UNESCO had not changed enough to warrant continued U.S. membership. (Table 6).

The increase in the politicization category was due to the publication of proportionately more themes accusing UNESCO of being anti-Western, anti-free society and anti-free enterprise. There also were proportionately more themes alleging that UNESCO favored opponents of the West, and that it supported collective, as opposed to individual rights. Charges of mismanagement and demands for reform also were slightly higher than in the agency copy.

The decline in the proportion of themes supportive of UNESCO was due to fewer references to the drawbacks to the U.S. of the withdrawal, and to fewer suggestions that the U.S. should remain a member but work for reform from within. There also were fewer expressions of regret and criticisms of the withdrawal, and of suggestions that UNESCO was in fact making efforts to reform.

DISCUSSION

The more hawkish line that appeared in the press can be attributed to two factors. One is that the papers tended to run those reports that were more strongly anti-UNESCO, while ignoring those that supported the agency or criticized the withdrawal. The other is that some agency reports that gave both sides of the argument were edited to exclude the positive. Usually this was simply a function of the structure of the report. Themes supportive of UNESCO often appeared at the end of the agency reports, and were omitted when the reports were edited down for space or other reasons.

One remarkable feature of the change in coverage over time is that, as previous studies had shown, before the "year of crisis" press reporting on UNESCO focused almost exclusively on the agency's promotion of a new information order. That was the case in the coverage of both the 1980 and the 1982 General Conferences. Once the U.S. government became involved, and began to stress UNESCO's politicization, mismanagement and need for reform, that quickly became the agenda for the press. Communication issues, in the news columns at least, were downplayed.

Selection of Reports

There are numerous examples of newspapers selecting from the agency files those reports most critical of UNESCO, while ignoring others that supported the organization or opposed the withdrawal. Stories about just ten events -- all of them tending to show UNESCO in a negative light -- comprise 40 percent of all the reports published.

Altogether 240 published reports, based on about 25 different news agency stories, dealt with the initial announcement in December 1983 that the U.S. planned to withdraw. These reports, virtually all of which quoted the State Department's criticisms as reasons for the pullout, were strongly anti-UNESCO in their orientation.

The most frequently used report on the initial announcement -- used by 50 newspapers -- was filed by the AP on December 24, 1983. It said that President Reagan, acting on the recommendation of Secretary of State George Shultz, had decided to take the first step toward withdrawing. It quoted officials, "who declined to be identified," as saying UNESCO had attempted to set press standards, raising concerns of censorship; and of stirring controversy by barring Israel from its activities. The officials also cited poor management and efforts to devise a code for multi-national corporations.

The second most frequently used story, based on a dozen different agency reports and appearing in 163 papers, concerned Britain's announcement in November 1984 that it too would give notice of withdrawal. Half of the published reports were based on two AP stories filed from London and Paris. They quoted Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe as saying Britain would pull out at the end of 1985 unless UNESCO made budget and management reforms. Although filed by different reporters in different centers -- David Mason in London and Harry Dunphy in Paris -- both the AP reports carried a virtually identical paragraphs stating that "Britain, the United States, the Netherlands and other Western nations have criticized UNESCO as being overly politicized, badly managed and often anti-Western." The UPI version, carried by 18 papers, also quoted Howe's criticisms in detail.

The event that drew the third highest coverage was the confirmation in December 1984 that the U.S. would withdraw. All of the agencies filed reports anticipating the move, and on the announcement itself. Of the 150 reports published, the most widely used was an AP story quoting Gregory Newell, assistant secretary of state for international affairs, as saying that the U.S. would withdraw because UNESCO remains "plagued by mismanagement and endemic hostility to Western values," notably a free press, free markets and individual human rights.

Other frequently used reports that put UNESCO in a bad light included an arson fire at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, which was depicted as an attempt to destroy records before they could be seen by U.S. congressional investigators. These appeared in 77 papers. The conflict between the U.S. and UNESCO over the return of $80 million in unspent funds was published by 40 papers. A report that the administration would name a panel to monitor changes in UNESCO (but that Newell was not optimistic UNESCO would make any changes), appeared in 33 papers. A report by 21 present and former UNESCO staff members saying there was duplication, overlapping and fragmentation in its programs, ran in 31. A highly critical report by the General Accounting Office that was leaked to the press made 22 newspapers, and reports on a document entitled "Crisis in UNESCO" listing criticisms and proposals for reform from 24 Western nations, made 17.

Not all agency reports critical of UNESCO were used widely by the press; some did not appear at all. But all of the most frequently used stories were predominantly anti-UNESCO in their orientation.

On the other hand, agency reports that depicted UNESCO in a favorable light, or were highly critical of the withdrawal, were published far less frequently. When foreign governments, like Britain, joined in American criticisms of UNESCO, they were widely quoted. When they opposed the pullout they generally were not. For example:

-- At the time of the flood of reports critical of UNESCO when the initial announcement was made, UPI filed a story quoting the Soviet Union as saying that the decision was an attempt by Washington to be the "world's self-styled ruler," and quoting a leading West German politician as saying it was "an arrogant example of

dollar diplomacy." The report also quoted Luis Ramallo, president of UNESCO's Spanish national committee, as saying the U.S. move "is not going to produce any wave of pullouts. It is an infantile tantrum." The report was carried by two newspapers.

-- A year later, a UPI report on Newell's press conference giving the reasons for the final decision to withdraw was carried by 22 papers. But another UPI report saying that America's allies, including Canada and Australia, had expressed regret, and said they preferred to work for reform from within, appeared in one paper.

-- A UPI report that China had called for an early return to UNESCO by the U.S. was not used at all.

Statements by U.S. organizations and individuals supporting UNESCO or critical of the withdrawal proved no more newsworthy to the nation's media gatekeepers. For example:

-- An AP report that Esteban Torres, former American ambassador to UNESCO, had spoken out against the withdrawal at a congressional hearing in April was picked up by one newspaper.

-- A New York Times News Service story in May, reporting that the American Association for the Advancement of Science had said there would be serious scientific consequences if the U.S. went ahead with the pullout, ran in two papers.

-- A New York Times report in December 1984 that American scientists, scholars and cultural organizations stood to lose significant benefits through the abandonment of UNESCO membership, made two papers.

News agency reports on the reaction of UNESCO or other U.N. organizations were largely ignored, as were reports that UNESCO was really trying to implement reforms to avert the pullout. For example:

-- A statement in April from M'Bow, filed by UPI, rejecting charges that UNESCO was mismanaged and that it sought to put media under government control did not make a single paper.

-- Reports in April that M'Bow had proposed sweeping management reforms aimed at improving UNESCO's operations was picked up by three UPI subscribers, while two carried the AP version.

-- A statement by M'Bow in October saying that UNESCO was the victim of "systematic denigration" in distorted news dispatches, made one paper.

-- A UPI report in October that the U.N. General Assembly's Special Political Committee had adopted a resolution calling for strong support for UNESCO and for a new international information order was not considered newsworthy by a single subscriber.

Structure of Reports

A second reason for the more negative orientation of the stories that appeared in the press was the structure of the agency reports. Following traditional journalistic practice, the reports were structured in the form of an inverted pyramid. The first paragraph, or lead, summarizes the main items of the news event. Each succeeding paragraph contains supporting details in descending order of importance. While every

paragraph in the report is newsworthy, each is less vital than the one before it. The inverted pyramid format allows readers to grasp the main points of the news quickly, and decide if they want to continue. But it is also useful to newspaper editors, since they do not have to search through a story to find the main point for a headline, and they can shorten it quickly by cutting from the bottom.

An analysis of the most frequently used reports on UNESCO shows that this is precisely what they did. Very few papers used the agency reports at full length, and when they shortened them it was almost always by simply lopping off paragraphs from the bottom. The problem is that even when the agency reports were relatively balanced in terms of the number of pro- and anti-UNESCO themes they contained overall, the themes that supported UNESCO or criticized the withdrawal tended to be lower down in the reports, and so were often omitted. A couple of examples illustrate this effect.

Altogether 50 papers used the AP report of December 24, 1983, saying that Reagan, acting on the recommendation of Shultz, had decided to take the first step toward withdrawal. Only three of the 50 papers carried all 18 paragraphs of the agency report. The average number of paragraphs used was 11. Seventeen papers trimmed the story simply by cutting paragraphs from the bottom. Another 25 papers trimmed from the bottom, but also cut one paragraph from the portion they used. Thus 45 of the papers -- 90 percent of the total -- limited their editing to cutting from the bottom of the inverted pyramid, or at most omitting one intervening paragraph. The remaining five papers were more selective, cutting out two or more paragraphs and incorporating some material from the latter part of the report.

The structure of the AP report, which included both pro- and anti-UNESCO themes, but reserved the pro-UNESCO themes until midway down, together with the tendency to cut from the bottom, resulted in published reports that were considerably more negative than the original.

The first paragraph, used by all 50 papers, reported that Reagan had decided to take the first step toward withdrawal. The second, used by 49 of the 50, said that an announcement was expected soon that would set the stage for a U.S. pullout "unless UNESCO changes its ways." The third, also carried by 49 papers, stated that UNESCO, which was "created to encourage scientific, educational and scientific exchanges," had attempted to set "worldwide press standards," and that it had stirred controversy by "barring Israel from its activities, a move that subsequently was reversed." The fourth and fifth paragraphs, which noted that the U.S. paid one-fourth of the organization's budget, and that the move "could be mostly a pressure tactic," were carried by 47 and 44 papers respectively.

The seventh paragraph, now down to 42 papers, noted that the State Department, in a report to Congress earlier in 1983, had said that UNESCO "provides the U.S. with useful opportunity not otherwise available for sponsoring scientific projects of global dimensions." Even fewer papers used the follow-up paragraph that said the State Department had cited as examples earthquake predictions, ocean research, and management of world forest and water resources. The same number of papers -- 35 in all -- also carried the ninth paragraph, quoting the State Department as saying, however, that there had been a number of recent attempts to destroy UNESCO's mandate and to politicize some of its activities; and the tenth which said, without attribution, that UNESCO is "often dominated by a bloc of countries whose policies collide with those of the United States."

The next two paragraphs quoted M'Bow as defending UNESCO against accusations of promoting government control of news media, and saying that large Western news organi-

zations do not provide in-depth coverage of developing countries. This is the point where many papers chose to curtail the report. Altogether 26 papers -- ten fewer than used the previous paragraph -- carried M'Bow's denial, and only 19 ran his criticism of Western news agencies.

The report then recalled remarks made ten days earlier by State Department spokesman John Hughes, criticizing UNESCO for "politicization, budget mismanagement, attempts to restrict press freedom and to impose economic regulation." And it concluded with three paragraphs recalling that President Carter had in 1977 withdrawn from the International Labor Organization in 1977 because it was "no longer committed to its original purpose," and was "dominated by the Soviet Union and Third World countries." These final three paragraphs ran in only five papers.

A similar example of bias introduced by the inverted pyramid form is a New York Times News Service report of December 15, 1983, which noted that "the Reagan administration is seriously considering withdrawing the United States from UNESCO." The report devoted the first 16 of its 19 paragraphs to criticisms of the organization by State Department spokesmen, particularly Newell. The 17th paragraph reported that "opponents of the withdrawal say the U.S. made major progress at the 22nd biennial conference of UNESCO," and that the withdrawal would "turn the organization over to those who are opposed to U.S. interests." The last two paragraphs quote Leonard Sussman of The U.S. National Commission as saying that the Paris conference showed that UNESCO "can be responsive to Western positions," and that if the U.S. were to sever its ties "we would have still less chance of influencing policy consistent with our objectives." Of the 22 papers that carried this report, 19 cut out Sussman's comments.

Precisely the same kind of pattern emerged from an analysis of another widely published story, an AP report of December 20, 1984, that Reagan had confirmed his decision to withdraw. The report ran in 34 papers (a second, slightly modified version of the AP report was used by another 20 papers). Of the 34 papers carrying one version, only three used all 28 paragraphs that the AP transmitted. The average number used was 15 -- or about half of the original. Eleven papers, or nearly a third of the total, cut it to the length they wanted by trimming paragraphs from the bottom, with no further editing. Three others cut from the bottom but also omitted one paragraph from the portion they used. Sixteen papers were more selective in their editing, omitting several paragraphs but including material from the latter part of the agency copy.

The first four paragraphs of the report, quoting Newell as attacking UNESCO for "endemic hostility to a free press, free markets and individual human rights," were carried by all 34 papers that used the report. The next paragraph, quoting the Soviet Union as saying the Reagan administration had shown "flagrant disregard for the interests of the international community," appeared in 30 of the papers. But the following paragraph, quoting Tass as saying the withdrawal had followed a "long and malicious campaign" against UNESCO was used by only 20. The next ten paragraphs, which expanded on Newell's criticisms, also appeared in an average of 20 papers each.

After that there was a sharp drop. The 19th paragraph, which noted that the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO had opposed the pullout, was reported in nine of the 34 papers. Paragraph 20, a statement from M'Bow that UNESCO would survive the withdrawal, was carried by 10. Comments by Rep. Jim Leach defending UNESCO and criticizing the pullout appeared in nine. A statement by the Heritage Foundation saying that the White House should be commended for its "principled stand," got into 10 papers. And the last

two paragraphs, listing UNESCO's projects to preserve historical sites, to develop education, media and agriculture in Third World countries, got into only seven.

In short, there was a close correlation between the position of a paragraph in the agency report and the frequency it was used. Given the fact that most papers cut reports from the bottom, efforts by the agencies to introduce balance into their stories by including opposing viewpoints were inadequate because they did not also give those viewpoints sufficient prominence.

SUMMARY

The findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

-- Only half of the nation's newspapers carried any news reports about the withdrawal;

-- There was a strong correlation between the size of a newspaper's circulation and the number of reports it carried;

-- The bulk of the news reports came from just four news sources: the AP, UPI, the New York Times News Service and the Washington Post/L.A. Times News Service;

-- The reports were highly critical of UNESCO and supportive of the withdrawal.

-- Reports that appeared in the press were even more negative towards UNESCO than the agency files on which they were based.

-- The newspapers followed the agency agenda, and tended to select from the agency files those reports most critical of UNESCO, while ignoring those that supported the organization or opposed the withdrawal.

-- When newspapers edited agency reports, they frequently cut out statements supportive of UNESCO, largely because they trimmed stories from the bottom, which is where the pro-UNESCO material often appeared.

Readers relying on their local paper for news on which to base their opinion about the merits of the withdrawal would have received a very one-sided picture of the issues involved.

Table 1

Number of reports carried in daily papers

Number of reports	Number of papers carrying reports	Percentage of all newspapers
0	1,411	83.0
1-5	140	8.0
6-10	78	4.6
11-15	43	2.5
16-20	15	0.9
21-25	8	0.5
26-30	2	0.1
31-35	1	0.1
36+	2	0.1
Totals	1,700	100.0

TABLE 2

Number of reports in cities with daily papers

Number of reports	Number of cities	Percentage of cities
0	1,340	87.0
1-5	76	5.0
6-10	34	2.2
11-15	29	2.0
16-20	27	1.8
21-25	13	0.9
26-30	9	0.6
31-35	4	0.3
36+	2	0.1
Totals 1,534	100.0	

TABLE 3

Sources of published reports and themes by agency

Agency	Number of reports (incl. duplicates)	Percentage of reports	Number of themes	Percentage of themes
AP	860	44	1,419	44
UPI	299	16	371	11
NYT	238	12	737	23
WP/LAT	104	5	246	14
Other (or no credit)	478	23	459	14
Totals	1,979	100	3,232	100

TABLE 4

Separate reports used from each agency

AGENCY	REPORTS Number	REPORTS Percent	PAPERS USING REPORTS Number	PAPERS USING REPORTS Percent	PAPERS USING REPORTS Average
AP	91	40	881	57	9.7
UPI	62	27	245	16	4.0
NYT	54	24	306	20	5.7
WP/LAT	19	9	101	7	5.3
Totals	226	100	1,533	100	6.8

TABLE 5

Orientation towards UNESCO of coverage by four news agencies

	Combined agencies	AP	UPI	NYT	W.Post	Other or no credit
Number of themes	3,232	1,419	371	737	246	459
Anti-Unesco/ pro-withdrawal	76%	79%	71%	81%	70%	70%
Pro-Unesco/ anti-withdrawal	21	18	26	18	27	27
Looking ahead	3	3	3	1	3	3
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100

TABLE 6

Issues covered by four news agencies

Number of themes	Combined agencies 3,232	AP 1,419	UPI 371	NYT 783	W.Post 246	Other or no credit 459
Anti-Unesco/ pro-withdrawal						
Politicization	24%	25%	21%	29%	16%	19%
Mismanagement	13	16	9	16	8	13
Reforms needed	13	12	13	17	10	13
Press issues	7	7	8	10	6	6
U.S. funds	5	5	6	4	5	5
Support for U.S.	6	8	8	5	5	5
Too little change	5	5	4	4	7	5
Criticism of M'Bow	2	1	1	2	10	3
Benefits to U.S.	1	1	1	1	2	1
Credibility at stake	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pro-Unesco/ anti-withdrawal						
Criticism of pullout	10	9	14	8	12	13
Affirmations	8	6	10	9	11	11
Denials of charges	2	2	1	1	2	3
Propaganda campaign	1	1	1	0	1	1
Looking ahead						
Future	2	2	3	1	2	3
Alternatives	1	1	1	1	1	1
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100

NOTES

[1]National News Council, "Report on News Coverage of the Belgrade UNESCO Conference," (New York, March 1981); and George Gerbner, "The American Press Coverage of the Fourth Extraordinary session of the UNESCO General Conference, Paris 1982," (Philadelphia: Annenberg School of Communications, 1983).

[2]C. Anthony Giffard, "News Agency Coverage of the U.S. Withdrawal from UNESCO". Paper presented at AEJMC Convention, Memphis, August 1985.